

Meeting	Forensic Services Committee
Date	26 July 2021
Location	MS Teams
Title of Paper	Forensic Services Director's Report
Presented By	Tom Nelson, Director Forensic Services
Recommendation to Members	For noting
Appendix Attached	No

PURPOSE

To update members on the recent key activities across Forensic Services

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 This report is to update members on activities across Forensic Services during the past few months.

2. UPDATES**Post Mortem Toxicology**

- 2.1 The Scottish Government has now announced a [new £6m toxicology laboratory for Scotland](#) to test for a wide range of substances, including drugs and alcohol which will be run by the SPA Forensic Services.
- 2.2 This funding will enable the transition of post mortem toxicology service from the University of Glasgow to SPA FS with specialist staff transferring and this large investment will help support a sustainable business.
- 2.3 Gary Holcroft is leading on this project for FS with significant assistance from Police Scotland colleagues and working very closely with the COPFS. We are very grateful to PS's Deputy Chief Officer David Page and his team for their continued support to help us deliver this important project.

- 2.4 As Martyn Evans, the Chair of SPA, [reflected in his statement](#) the lead up to this announcement involved a great deal of work by the Authority and Forensic Services Committee with the Scottish Government and COPFS. FS will continue to report this project's progress in the coming months to both the FSC and the Authority.

Forensic 2026 Strategy

- 2.5 While there are detailed reports later on the progress of the Forensic 2026 Strategy, I want to thank the wide group of external organisations and people who have given their time so generously to help us refresh our strategy.
- 2.6 As well as colleagues from forensic science professional bodies and other operators this has included: representatives from academia; Police Scotland and the wider policing community; COPFS; members of the Forensic Committee and the SPA; the Biometrics Commissioner; HMICS; and others.
- 2.6 Many of these people took part in a recent Insights Day organised and guided by colleagues from Police Scotland's Strategy, Insight and Innovation team, who are playing a key role in helping us develop our refreshed strategy. I am grateful for their time and insight which will help improve this strategy.

Retirement

- 2.7 As members are aware, this is my final Forensic Services Committee before I retire after more than 41 years working in forensic science - the past 26 years in Scotland.
- 2.8 As I leave Forensic Services can look ahead to a strong future with our refreshed strategy, the FS 2026 Full Business Cases finalised, and the recent Scottish Government investment in the new toxicology laboratory. While I feel this is the right time for me to retire, I also have confidence that this is the right time for FS to have a new director to lead these future plans.
- 2.9 I am very proud of all we have been able to achieve in Forensic Services by working together to create and nurture a national service of world-class standing. I want to thank the members of the Forensic Services Committee for their support and challenge over the past years.

OFFICIAL

2.10 I will work to ensure as smooth as handover as possible to the new director and I will continue to watch with great interest the developments of both Forensic Services and in forensic science.

Transforming Forensics

2.11 SPA Forensic Services has been supporting the work of the National Police Chief Councils (for England and Wales) supporting their Strategic Review of Transforming Forensics and Forensic Capability Network.

2.12 There have been continued changes to the funding and the delivery of forensic science services in England and Wales in the recent years and this review is looking at how best to take this forward to provide some stability for the future.

2.13 FS have been supporting Police Scotland chief officer colleagues on this project to explain how forensic services are delivered throughout Scotland to help inform this NPCC review.

Biometrics Commissioner

2.14 Along with Martyn Evans, Chair of the SPA, and Lynn Brown, chief Executive of SPA, I met with Dr Brian Plastow, the inaugural Scottish Biometrics Commissioner.

2.15 FS will continue to work with Dr Plastow, as a member of his Advisory Group, as he develops the first strategic plan and the first Code of Practice for Biometrics in Scotland.

Award for work on polymer banknotes

2.16 Carina Joannidis, who works as a Forensic Services Mark Enhancement Officer at the Scottish Crime Campus, has been awarded the Institute of Materials, Minerals and Mining Materials World Medal for Money Talks - the best feature published during the year in the Institute's Materials World magazine. The award was for her contribution to a collaborative project about examination of the new polymer banknotes.

COVID update

2.17 As throughout the pandemic, the health, safety, and wellbeing of staff remain the priority for FS. We continue to work closely with

Operation Talla to plan for future changes - when it is safe to do so – aligned with the cautious approach outlined by the First Minister.

- 2.18 While of the removal of some COVID restrictions across Scotland is welcome, given this cautious approach staff who can will continue to work from home until Op Talla advises it is safe to change the current working arrangements. In spite of these challenges, FS staff have continued produce outstanding results – which is reflected in the attached FS performance report and I thank them for their continued commitment and dedication.

My Career

- 2.19 MyCareer, our new appraisal system underpinned by the Competency & Values Framework, completes its Proof of Concept pilot on 31 August. Forensic Services has been one of three areas of business, alongside Police Scotland’s C3 and Forth Valley Division, taking part in the pilot.
- 2.20 Staff received detailed support, guidance, and training to help them use this new appraisal system which underpins one of the Forensic 2026 Strategy strategic objectives to value and develop our people, promoting equality and wellbeing. We now look forward to receiving the feedback from this pilot.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 There are no financial implications in this report.

4. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 There are no personnel implications associated with this paper.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 There are no legal implications associated with this paper.

6. REPUTATIONAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 There are no reputational implications associated with this paper.

7. SOCIAL IMPLICATIONS

7.1 There are no social implications associated with this paper.

8. COMMUNITY IMPACT

8.1 There are no community implications associated with this paper.

9. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

9.1 There are no equality implications associated with this paper.

10. ENVIRONMENT IMPLICATIONS

10.1 There are no environmental implications associated with this paper.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Members are requested to:

Note the information contained within this report.